

*Effective Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Programs
for Every Community*

Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways — RiPP

Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP) is a school-based violence prevention program designed to provide students in middle and junior high schools with conflict resolution strategies and skills. It combines a classroom curriculum of social/cognitive problem solving with real-life skill-building opportunities such as peer mediation. Students learn to apply critical thinking skills and personal management strategies to personal health and well-being issues. Delivered over 3 years, RiPP teaches key concepts that include:

- The importance of significant friends or adult mentors
- The relationship between self-image and gang-related behaviors
- The effects of environmental influences on personal health

Using a variety of lessons and activities, students learn about the physical and mental development that occurs during adolescence; analyze the consequences of personal choices on health and well-being; learn that they have nonviolent options when conflicts arise; and evaluate the benefits of being a positive family and community role model.

INTENDED POPULATION

RiPP is a primary prevention program designed for the universal population of students enrolled in grades six, seven, and eight in middle and junior high schools. RiPP is taught each year over a 3-year period, and is applicable to children from all socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. It has been tested in predominantly African American urban schools in Virginia and in rural central Florida schools with more multi-cultural student populations, and is being implemented in a suburban New Jersey school district.

PROVEN RESULTS

- Decreased school disciplinary code violations for violent behaviors
- Decreased student-reported frequency of drug use, violent behavior, and fight-related injuries
- Decreased peer pressure to use drugs
- Increased prosocial attitudes and peer support for positive behavior
- Increased use of violence prevention resources
- Increased student and staff reports of quality of life

INTERVENTION

Universal

Selective

Indicated



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

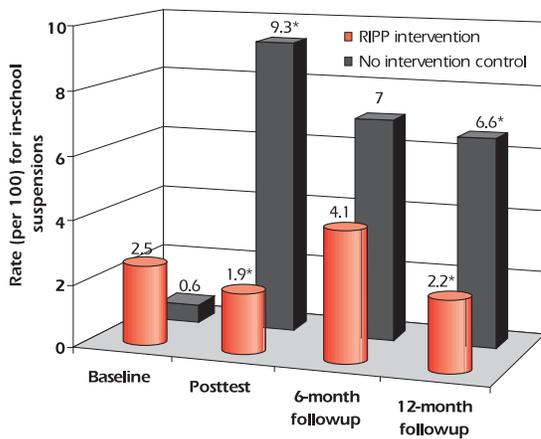
Outcomes

RiPP has demonstrated efficacy in urban schools that serve predominantly African American youth, as well as in more ethnically diverse rural schools. In comparison to control students, at posttest, students who participated in RiPP have shown:

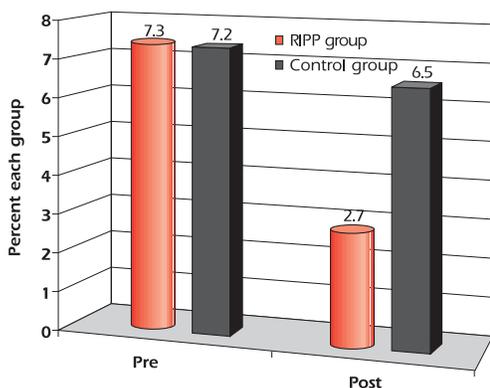
- Fewer disciplinary violations for violent offenses
- Fewer in-school suspensions
- Increased use of peer mediation programs
- Fewer fight-related injuries
- Greater knowledge of effective problem-solving skills

Students also reported significantly lower approval of violent behavior, more peer support for nonviolent behavior, and less peer pressure to use drugs.

Effect on in-school suspension of boys



Prevalence of reported injuries due to fighting at beginning and end of school



BENEFITS

- Develops norms and expectations for nonviolent conflict resolution and positive achievement.
- Provides adult and peer models for conflict resolution and positive achievement.
- Diminishes stereotypes, beliefs, attributions, and cognitive scripts that support violence.
- Enlarges skills repertoire for nonviolent conflict resolution and positive achievement.
- Promotes self-management through repeated use of problem-solving models.
- Enlarges participants' ability to identify the optimal violence prevention strategy within a given situation and existing personal skills and values.

HOW IT WORKS

RiPP employs a valued adult role model—a trained RiPP facilitator—who models prosocial attitudes and behaviors to teach students the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that promote schoolwide norms for nonviolence and positive risk-taking. The problem-solving model is the backbone for the entire curriculum; each session builds upon the previous ones, utilizing the entire model in a cumulative fashion. Typically taught during the academic subjects of social studies, health, and/or science, it is delivered during three academic grades:

Grade Six—the RiPP facilitator teaches the curriculum during 25 50-minute lessons on a weekly basis throughout the school year and supervises the peer mediation program.

Grades Seven and Eight—students receive 12 50-minute lessons each year, taught by the same person during these grades. The peer mediation program continues, providing institutional support for the conflict resolution skills taught in all three curricula.

The RiPP curriculum includes a variety of activities and techniques, including—

- Team-building activities
- Social/cognitive problem-solving
- Repetition and mental rehearsal
- Relaxation techniques
- Small group work
- Specific social skills for preventing violence
- Role plays
- Peer mediation

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Training

RiPP facilitators are required to attend a 5-day training session to learn how to implement the RiPP curriculum. This session is offered each summer by the staff of Prevention Opportunities, LLC. School districts can also arrange for training at their selected site. Reduced training fees are available to small school districts when additional teachers attend training within a 3-year time frame. Ongoing technical assistance and consultation are available by phone and e-mail.

Prevention Opportunities also has the capacity to assist with adapting the program for special situations (e.g., translating printed materials into additional languages) and consultation on the design and implementation of local program evaluations. Prevention Opportunities also provides peer mediation training, which is not included in the 5-day facilitator training required to teach the curriculum.

Materials

In addition to a detailed teacher's manual and student workbooks, *Promoting Nonviolence in Early Adolescence—Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways*, is available to provide detailed information on assessing school readiness, facilitator selection, program implementation, and cultural and community adaptations. All of these materials are available as part of the training. The book may be purchased separately from Plenum Publishers.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In 1992, Virginia Commonwealth University was awarded a cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to evaluate a violence prevention program already in use in the Richmond Public Schools. The results from this evaluation led to the creation of a new violence prevention program—RiPP. Program research and revisions continued, and the program was disseminated to a different target population in central Florida. The program has been used in Richmond, VA; central Florida; and Passaic, NJ. Copies of articles and evaluation studies are available from Prevention Opportunities, LLC.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Three published studies have examined the effectiveness of RiPP. The first study evaluated sixth grade RiPP at three urban middle schools serving predominantly African American students. Classes were randomly assigned to intervention ($n=321$) or no-intervention control group ($n=305$). Self-report and school disciplinary data were collected at pretest, posttest, 6-month, and 1-year followup. In the second study, RiPP was evaluated in an ethnically diverse rural school using pretest, posttest, and 1-year followup self-report data of randomly assigned sixth grade students. Pretest data were collected

from 96 students in the intervention group and 108 students in the control group. The third study evaluated sixth and seventh grade RiPP using a between-school design in an ethnically diverse rural setting to compare outcomes over 2 years between four intervention schools ($n=655$) and four control schools ($n=685$). Self-report measures were completed pretest (the beginning of sixth grade) and at four other time points, concluding in the fall of eighth grade.

PROGRAM DEVELOPERS

Aleta Lynn Meyer, Ph.D.

Wendy Bauers Northup, M.A.

Dr. Meyer has 17 years of experience collaboratively designing, implementing, evaluating, and replicating effective health promotion and prevention programs for early adolescents. The programs she has helped design focus on violence prevention, depression prevention, and cancer prevention in both rural and urban settings. She is assistant professor of psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University and currently is co-principal investigator on a multisite violence prevention project funded by the CDC.

Wendy Northup has been a teacher and community prevention program manager for 25 years. She has numerous certifications in conflict resolution and mediation and has worked as a program developer on several violence prevention programs. She has trained and consulted on a number of topics in violence and substance abuse prevention.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For training and program information, contact:

Wendy Northup, M.A., Co-Director
Prevention Opportunities, LLC
12458 Ashland Vineyard Lane
Ashland, VA 23005
Phone: (804) 798-1369
Fax: (804) 261-8547
E-mail: nor@co.henrico.va.us
Web site: www.has.vcu.edu/RiPP

For research information, contact:

Aleta Meyer, Ph.D., Co-Director
Prevention Opportunities, LLC
14308 Riverside Drive
Ashland, VA 23005
Phone: (804) 828-0015
Fax: (804) 827-1511
E-mail: ameyer@saturn.vcu.edu
Web site: www.has.vcu.edu/RiPP

RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Effective Program—Safe and Drug Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education